

EXPLOSION KILLS 2,000.

Appalling Loss of Life Said to Have Followed Explosion at Formosa.

TAKAO MAGAZINE BLOWN UP.

The Victims Were Chinese Soldiers Stationed in a Fort at that Place.

OUTRAGES BY BLACK FLAGS.

British Cruiser Mercury Sent to Protect the English Residents from the Outlaws.

HONG KONG, Feb. 20.—The information that has come here from the island of Formosa, since the sudden departure on Feb. 18 of the British cruiser Mercury, upon the receipt of information that the notorious robbers known as Black Flags were committing outrages and the British residents were in need of urgent help, has been meagre; but what has been received shows that the situation is as serious as the first despatches indicated.

Reports have arrived to-day that the disturbances on the island are increasing, and have become so bad that the merchants are alarmed and are leaving.

It is also reported here that an explosion, which recently occurred in the magazine of the fort at Takao, a treaty port on the southwestern coast of the island, and was at first understood to be of a rather trivial character, was terrible in its results.

It is now said that the explosion killed 2,000 Chinese soldiers attached to the fort and injured many others. A squadron of Japanese warships is patrolling the island.

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